

# HACKNEY PEOPLE'S PRESS

Hackney's **OTHER** Newspaper

## LESNEY WORKERS DRIVEN OUT

In what could be described as one of the swiftest cut-throat moves in industrial history, one of Hackney's largest private employers has made half of its workforce redundant.

The management of Lesney Products Ltd., which until recently employed around 4000 people in factories at Lea Valley and Hackney Wick, told its staff that, as part of their 'rationalisation' programme, over 2,000 of them had to go.

By now, all those made redundant have left, and are waiting to pick up their final payments; but what is noticeable about this move is the speed with which the management carried out the redundancies, and the seeming lack of response by union officials to carry out adequate negotiations with the company.

The events leading up to the redundancies beg a number of questions: why was management allowed to 'dispose' of its employees before the statutory 90 day redundancy period was up; why wasn't a 'first in last out' policy adopted so that long-standing employees remained; why was it that those made redundant will not be entitled to a possible 10% pay deal which is being negotiated?

### VOLUNTARY

At a meeting held in early January, shop stewards were told by union officials that there were going to be lay-offs in all factories in the area. This was later amended to full redundancies and a voluntary redundancy list was to be drawn up for those employees who chose to leave.

Then, on 15th January all employees received a letter from the management confirming "termination of your employment with the Company due to redundancy as already advised to you". The letter

went on to say that, in accordance with regulations under the Employment Protection Act, they were entitled to "notice of termination of employment and to redundancy payment where applicable", and that "employment with the Company will cease on Tuesday 15th April" - the statutory 90 day redundancy period as specified in the Act.

### OPTION

However on Wednesday 23rd January, one week since the redundancies were officially announced, another letter was sent out by the management telling those workers being made redundant that they had the option of either leaving on Friday 25th (two days' notice), in which case they would receive a "statutory redundancy payment" for those who had worked long enough to qualify of one week's pay for every year of service, plus 8 weeks' basic pay ex gratia. The alternative was to stay on for the full 90 days.

Faced with the prospect of 8 weeks' pay ex gratia and angered by the company's "slap in the face", all but 2 employees chose to leave on Friday 25th. By choosing this option they lost out on any bonus and overtime they would have earned during the 90 days; the Company also got out of paying National Insurance and other contributions for that period. Yet workers claim they were not advised by their union officials about this decision. In fact, some night shift workers were only given the letter at 5am on Thursday morning, and at one factory workers

were told at 3 o'clock on the Friday morning that they had to go home - without transport.

As a further kick in the teeth, redundant workers were told that they would not be entitled to a proposed 10% pay rise that is being negotiated and will be backdated to the beginning of January.

There seems to have been very little resistance to this sell-out - despite the resentment felt by the workforce. When HPP tried to contact Hackney Wick

works convenor George Lipmann, it was told he had been made redundant; and Albert Felton, works convenor for the Lea Conservancy Rd. factory, told HPP on Jan 28 that he had been off sick and had no information to give.

### VENOMOUS

A spokesperson at ASTMS Divisional Office, who claimed that nearly 200 of his union members had left, told HPP that workers at Lesneys were "quite venomous" about the redundancy

arrangements and were so angry at the management's "take-it-or-leave-it" attitude that they did not want to work there any longer.

He admitted that if some sort of strike action had been taken the workers might have been able to negotiate a better redundancy deal. Yet they had "accepted at the first hurdle" and after that it was too late to do anything.

Former shop steward at the Eastway factory Annie Spike,

*Continued on page 8.*



A lorry load of toys leaves Lesney's Eastway factory. Could this be the end of the road for the Matchbox firm?

## SPG PROTEST AT STOKE NEWINGTON

At least five units of the police Special Patrol Group (SPG) were operating in Hackney as this issue went to press. This was confirmed by Scotland Yard, who stated that they were based at Stoke Newington police station.

The Friends of Blair Peach Committee, a group of friends and colleagues of the Hackney teacher who died after being struck by an SPG officer during an anti-National Front demonstration in Southall last April, called an immediate picket of Stoke Newington police station to protest at the SPG presence in Hackney. This will take place on Thursday 7 February at 6pm.

The SPG has about 200 officers, based at various

police stations around London. The nearest of these to Hackney are Caledonian Road and Leytonstone and it is from Leytonstone that the unit involved in Blair Peach's death is thought to have come.

The controversial unit's last intrusion into the borough was in December 1978. Then they only stayed for about two weeks. This followed a month spent in Lambeth, when their actions led the borough council to set up a public enquiry into the relations between the police and the local community. More than 40% of the people they arrested were black, in an area where the black population is about

half that ratio. They carried out about 430 arrests for obstruction, alleged theft and "sus" and their actions angered the local community so much that the borough council set up its own public enquiry into police-community relations.

Since then calls for the disbandment of the SPG - or greater control over how they are used - have grown more and more frequent. This has even been the policy of Hackney Council since last October when deputy leader Johnny Kotz issued a statement after the announcement that there would be no prosecution of police officers after Blair Peach's death.

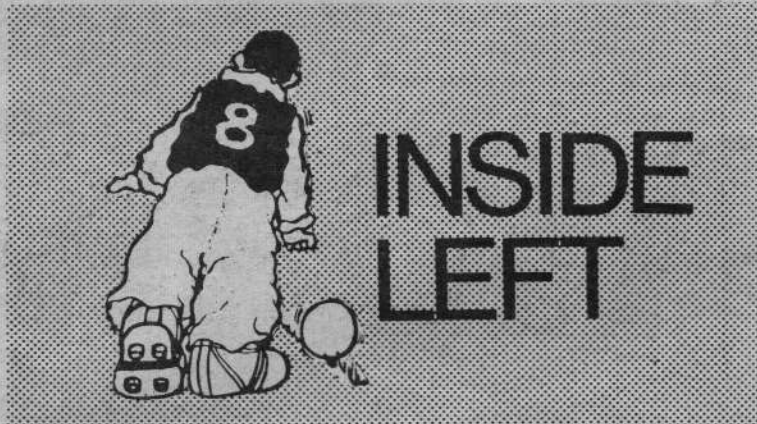


# 25% rent rise splits Labour Group

This month, I thought I would go and listen in to the borough's leaders at work. Each month, all the councillors, the senior officers, members of the public and cub reporters from HPP and the Gazette gather to view Hackney's longest running farce, the Council meeting. Much more interesting is the dress rehearsal for this, the Labour group meeting, which takes place two evenings before, and it was this I insinuated myself into last month. (That was me lurking behind the curtains in the far corner, Martin and Johnny! Sorry you couldn't come over and say hello.)

Main topic on the agenda was the rent rises. Now HPP scooped the world last month in disclosing that these were going to be 25 per cent, and, lo and behold, there was a motion put to group that this was to be the figure. Tablets of stone had been received from the government (which is a Tory government, you will recall), saying that all councils Must Put Up Their Rents by 25 per cent. Otherwise, the wrath of Michael Heseltine would descend on the unfortunate burghers.

So our council, which you



will also recall, consists of 59 Labour members and one Tory, decided to follow the Tory diktat. "You will obey," said the chief Dalek. "We will obey," the little Earthlings replied.

## AMENDMENT

There was a big row when this came up. The leadership argued that there had to be rent rises of this size because GLC tenants were facing similar rent increases. The hardline Left thought that there should be no rent rises at all, and there was also the Weller-Ross amendment, a compromise between the two. Brian Weller, seconded by Gerry

Ross, proposed that the rent rises should be just 15 per cent. More acrimony followed, but some of those on the Right decided that they could support this quite modest proposal. Deputy mayor Linda Hibberd and her mum and dad, Matilda and Bob Owen, were amongst those who thought that perhaps 25 per cent was a bit much.

The Broad Left was, however, in its usual state of disarray, with some people supporting the amendment, and the hardliners - no cuts, no rent and rate rises, no redundancies - abstaining. So the amendment fell by 14 votes to 25.

The Right got back into line and voted for the 25% rise and the Left, for a change, was nearly unanimously against except GLC tenant Dora Fenton - and the motion passed by 28-19.

Then, my God, it was realised that the tenants might not be too happy about having to pay these rent rises. The natives might get restless, if the situation wasn't "explained" to them. With one bound, ex-All Ireland High Jump champion (I kid you not) Catharine Hoey solved that little problem. She proposed that a special meeting be called, to which the Federation of Hackney Tenants Associations and individual tenants' associations should be invited, so that they could be told exactly why the rent rises were going to be so stiff. The Right all thought that this was a splendid idea, because they knew that Charles Cable and Frances Alexander, the chair and vice-chair of the Housing Management Committee, would have to do the shit work. So they all voted for this meeting to be arranged - with the exception of Charles Cable and Frances Alexander. It should be a night they will remember.

Here we see the beginning of the end of the Council's posture on the fight against the Tories. The rent rises of 25 per cent are only a part of the package of cuts in services and increased impositions on the tenants and ratepayers of the borough that will be announced - with some stealth - over the next couple of months. Plenty of words have been spoken, plenty of gestures have been made. All of them have now evaporated, leaving nothing but a faintly acrid smell and a bad taste in the mouth. It's enough to make you sick.

# PROTEST ABOUT NURSERY CUTS



On 28 January, hundreds of people including parents, children, nursery workers and union representatives gathered on the Town Hall steps to protest about the Council's proposal to board up three new nurseries. Frustrated by the lack of interest shown by the Council leaders entering the building, the crowd decided to go into the policy committee meeting to state their views. As many as could, carrying banners and placards, squashed into the Council chamber and stood around the members. The children and babies sat on the table. The police arrived to move the protesters but were told by Councillor Steve Scott that the leaders did not feel in physical danger.

In response to the crowd's demand that the nurseries

**IF YOU KNEW WHAT WE'RE CONSIDERING YOU'D DIE OF FRIGHT.**

are opened, Council leader Martin Ottolangui assumed the role of spokesperson for the council and stated that no decision had yet been finalised. He pointed out, however, that the government had lopped six million pounds off their budget; so cuts are inevitable.

Most of the protesters asked to be given more information. People wanted to know the options, hear the debate or at least see the agendas. Mr Ottolangui's cynical response to this request for public consultation was: "If you knew what we're considering you'd die of fright."

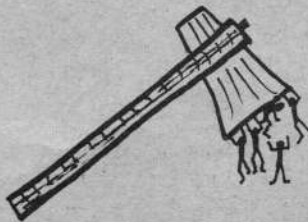
All questions and suggestions were met with the repeated insistence, "If you don't like what we do, stand for election yourselves."

Max Feldman, chairperson of Social Services committee, was forced into an admission that on Sunday morning he had been visited by 20 of his neighbours from his estate who were outraged by the nursery closures. He said, "I told them I would oppose this proposal at Leaders Panel and at full council, and you can quote that."

Certainly, the councillors now know the feelings of local people: but their attitude gave no support to the protesters. Another indication of the lack of stomach for the fight ahead?

## fightback starts up

The local campaign against the cuts has got itself the new title of Hackney Fightback, under the sponsorship of Hackney Trades Council. Their aim is still, Trades Council secretary Dermot McNeill told HPP, to turn the borough council into a campaigning body against the cuts.



They have asked that the Council should support fully the TUC sponsored national demonstration against the cuts, by printing a special issue of the Hackney Herald, sending leaflets to every house in the borough, and producing posters and advertisements in cinemas like the Rio and in the Gazette. If the Council doesn't do this, then the Fightback campaign will organise as well as its limited resources allow it to. It has called a picket of the full Council meeting on 26 March, when the budget for 1980-81 will be presented, and when the cuts that Hackney will be making will be announced.

Further details will be announced in next month's issue.

## Learn your Rights!

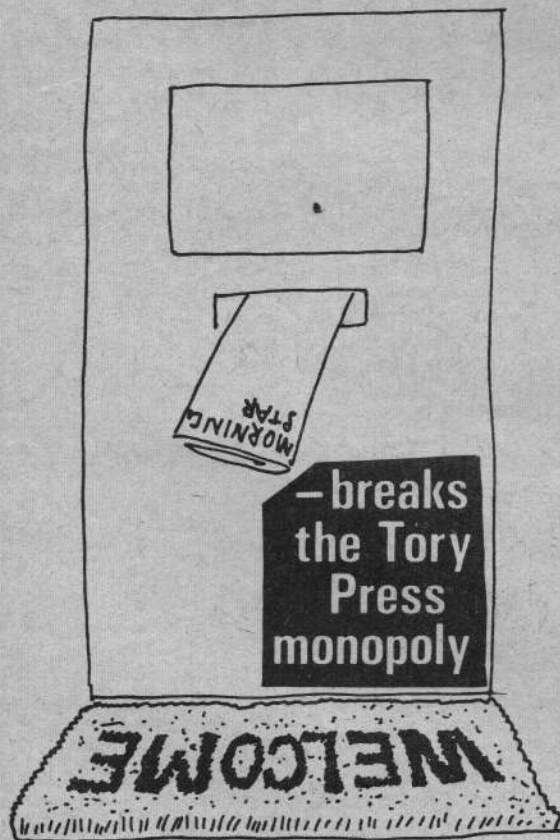
For six weeks, on Tuesday evenings, from 19 February, the WEA are running a series of six lectures with discussions, on a wide variety of subjects, all relating to the rights of the citizen in the welfare state.

Speakers include representatives of the Family Rights Group, MIND, CPAG, Hackney Borough and SHELTER.

There is a registration fee of 30p (less for the unwaged) and the discussions start at 8 pm on Tuesdays.

Further information from Janet Rees at Centerprise, tel 254 9632.

Read the Morning Star every day



available from your newsagent

Marxism Today

Theoretical and discussion journal of the Communist Party  
Published monthly • 50 pence



# £7.5million housing cut planned

News is beginning to leak out from Hackney Council about the cuts we can expect in housing provision. Unless an organised campaign can be mounted to fight them, these cuts will be implemented.

All the debates have gone ahead in secret, during the confidential parts of committee meetings. Hackney's officers have come up with two alternative strategies to implement a cut of £7½ MILLION out of the provisional money allocation for 1980-81 of £22½ Million. This represents a cut of about 33 per cent, ie one third of the budget on their housing revenue account. Capital expenditure is subject to cash limits imposed by central government and is controlled through the Housing Investment Programme (HIP). The HIP allocation has still not been announced by the Department of the Environment, however, and even more savage cuts can be expected in development programmes.

## ALTERNATIVE

The two alternative revenue cut strategies that have been drawn up by officers for councillors to choose between are as follows:

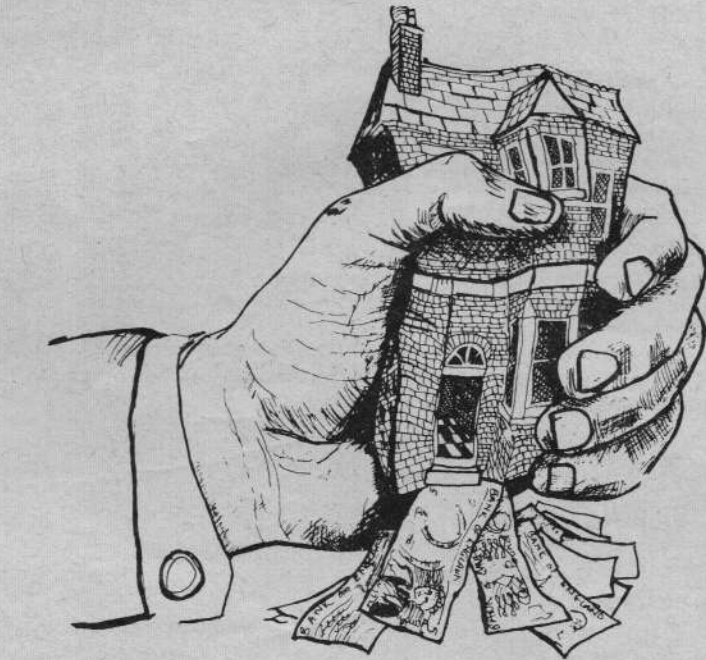
Strategy 1: Increasing the rates and cutting back services

Main items: 25 per cent rent increase (£1,720,000), 40 per cent heating increases in May/June (£770,000) (on top of the 40 per cent increase implemented in December), reducing redecoration on flats before letting (£370,000), cuts in general maintenance (£1,205,000), cutting back the bed and breakfast bill for homeless families (£300,000), abolishing discretionary rent rebates/allowances (£250,000), cutting staff through freezing vacancies (£170,000); other smaller items produce a total saving of £5,086,000, still £2.4m short of the total they are ordering. This extra would have to come through increasing the rates.

Strategy 2: No rate increase (as a result of Housing, there will be a large rate increase anyway). Cutting Housing services drastically

Strategy 2 includes all cuts in Strategy 1, and in addition they would cancel the reintroduction of caretakers on estates (a long-standing Labour election promise; it would save £300,000), cutting improvement programmes on post-war estates (£300,000), increase rents by a further 5 per cent to 30 per cent (£350,000), reduce maintenance work (presumably to nil, saving £1,050,000), more decoration cuts (£220,000), sacking cleaners (about 20, saving £120,000), cancel the reorganisation of cleaners (saving £90,000). Other smaller items would bring the total up to the £7.5m.

Although councillors have not yet made a decision,



some of these cuts are already happening. On 28 January, all job vacancies in the comprehensive housing service were frozen. Sections which are already understaffed will face a further increase in workloads as other staff leave or retire. The quality of service, which had shown vague signs of improvement over the last two years, will inevitably deteriorate as staff become overworked, tenants find that no reports can be made and prospective tenants find that there is no chance of being housed in the next few years.

## HOMELESS

In other areas, previously sound policies are being tightened up and changed in response to the shortage in supply of housing and the growing demand. Hackney is having to pay £1.4m in bills to bed and breakfast hotels to cope with the homelessness problem. Over 200 families are in temporary accommodation (mostly hotels, which charge £5 per person per night for completely inadequate accommodation). In reaction, the Council are now insisting on legal eviction papers, even when a family is on the street with nowhere to go; after a legal eviction families evicted for rent arrears will risk being classed as "intentionally homeless" and therefore not the Council's responsibility under the 1977 Homeless Persons Act. Homeless families with children will once again be rehoused above the fifth floor in tower blocks. Environmental health action against the slum bed and breakfast landlords, which the Council uses, has been postponed because Hackney doesn't want to close them down - it would mean having to rehouse homeless people properly instead of making them go through the bed and breakfast punishment blocks for a one-year "stretch".

So, the financial cuts and the homelessness proposals are just two examples of what Hackney Council is plotting in secret. It is our right

as residents and receivers of these services to know what they are doing and why. Their present activities smack of the 19th century paternalism when parish councils, philanthropists and politicians would discuss and decide what was good for working people. In Hackney, the fact is that the Council are frightened to tell the electorate what they are doing just as they are frightened to fight an anti-cuts campaign.

## FIGHT

We have to fight the cuts they are imposing; action needs to be taken by tenants' associations, community groups and ward labour parties. The Hackney Housing Action Group has reformed in response to the growing crisis on local housing. The first meeting to discuss these issues will be on Thursday 7 February. Further meetings are planned. Join it yourselves or get your union, TA or other organisation to send delegates. For more information, contact the Housing Action Group, c/o Terry Robinson 739 3631, or the Hackney Federation of Tenants' Associations, 380 Old Street, EC1.

## Directory

A new directory has just been published by Hackney Community Link-up, the umbrella group which co-ordinates community activities across the borough.

Unfortunately, it does contain a number of inaccuracies and incorrect entries, but it should still be useful as a guide. Don't be surprised if you get referred on to someone else if you use any of the addresses or phone numbers!

Available free from Hackney Community Link-up, 380 Old Street, London EC1.

# TENANTS BEHIND BARS

"Put them behind bars!" That's the new attitude of Hackney Council to the tenants of the distressed estate of Smalley Road. The package of remedial works that they have proposed includes a security grille to be fitted inside the louvre windows on the ground floor. Not surprisingly, a tenants' meeting decided that they didn't want these grilles at all (cost to the council about £50) and would rather have proper windows (cost £200). It remains to be seen whether the Council decide to impose the grilles against the tenants' wishes.

walls with anti-fungal paint - a measure which has so far proved totally unsuccessful.

Ex-chairperson of the Tenants' Association, Frank Goscombe, told the tenants' meeting that the Council "was trying to put into action the cheapest and easiest remedial works possible. There is not assurance that these works will cure faults on Smalley Road. They are of the opinion that the majority of tenants are not worried. We have to show them that this is not so."

The new chairperson of the association, Winston Mars, said that the consultations with the Council had become a farce. He urged the tenants to support the TA as wholeheartedly as possible, and told one anxious woman whose disabled mother is still living in appalling conditions that the only way she could get the Council to take action was to take them to court. The TA had a lawyer with them, he said, and could help individual tenants in cases like this.

The mood of Smalley tenants is desperate. They are now convinced that no one on the Council will keep their word about consultation. They all want to carry on living on the estate: some of them waited 20 or more years to move into what should be very nice homes indeed. Now all they face is a very damp future.

## CONSULTATION

All the fine words that the Council officers came up with in the summer about consulting the tenants before making any decisions about their future have now come to nothing. The "panel" of tenants, councillors, council officers, and independent advisers is now practically defunct, and council officers are now determined to impose measures which will not solve the problems of Smalley - or other estates built to the same design. They propose extending the central heating upstairs, which should reduce the condensation problems, but they are still persisting in painting interior

## Sit. Vac. at Centerprise

CENTERPRISE requires a second worker to co-ordinate its advice-giving services.

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welfare rights both within the project and the community is important.

First and foremost, the worker will be a general member of the Centerprise collective, and spend over half the week sharing in the administration of the project; this involves working shifts in other areas (including the shops), cleaning and attending meetings.

Send large s.a.e. for details, or collect. Closing date 22 February 1980.

Centerprise Trust Ltd, 136 Kingsland High St., E8.

## POETRY CORNER

BIOT

Crickets in the night  
Among the long grasses  
Mists and stars  
Over dark and different hills.

RAIN

The empty garden where the rain falls  
Suddenly very quiet and full of scents  
That during the daytime  
Are very mild  
Water soaks into the lawn  
Runs from the leaves  
Of the Apple trees  
Washes the red walls.

In the distance the hills are white with mist  
The sparrows and blackbirds  
Waiting for worms.

Catharine Froy

Dear HPP,

I am surprised that Bob Masters regards the work of the Hackney Writers' Workshop as being wooden in poetic form. As our latest anthology, Writers Workshop 3, shows, our writing ranges



widely both in subject and style. Nor do we see art as a political platform, but rather as a means by which people can share their lives and hopes and struggles. That is why, far from shutting ourselves away, we often give public readings, and we welcome new members.

Yours sincerely,  
Savitri Hensman  
(Winner Hackney Poetry Competition, 1976)



# NF BUNKER'S LAST DAYS?

"There are planning matters and political matters - it's an extremely difficult position," Leo Kealey, the Department of the Environment inspector told us at the enquiry into the use of 73 Great Eastern Street, EC2, the National Front's headquarters, patriotically christened "Excalibur House".

As a planning issue - it was simple enough. Great Eastern Street lies in south Shoreditch, which is zoned for industrial development under the Greater London Development Plan. So if the building was used for offices in May last year, when the Council served enforcement notices on the owners and occupiers, then planning controls had been breached. The Inspector had merely to find out how No 73 had been used.

Since the enforcement notices were on the grounds that No 73 is being used as a headquarters for the National Front, as well as simply "offices", keeping politics out of it was a non-starter. Front members and their opponents all know No 73 is their headquarters - but the Front had to try to prove otherwise.

Their contorted attempts to do that, plus the numbers of groups and individuals coming forward to support the Council's case made the hearing last 11 days.

## fruity

By the first day of the hearing, Paul Kavanagh, the director of NF Properties Ltd., which owns the building, tried to convince us that the "NF" in the title was coincidence - "New Fruit" could have been in our minds. By the last day, faced with the evidence of the Front's own publications, barrister Michael Gettleston had to admit No 73 had been bought to be the Front's HQ. Only, he said, "their plans hadn't come to reality".

In a sense, Gettleston was right. No 73 hasn't been the base from which the Front would take over the country as they'd imagined. Instead, its use has been a major bone of contention within the Front as well as between Front and opponents. Its use is tied up with the bitter leadership struggle which surfaced in the party when it lost all its deposits at the last general election. Last August, Kavanagh obtained an injunction against Front chairman John Tyndall, restraining him from preventing access to the "social club" on the third floor of Excalibur House.

When the enquiry resumed after Christmas, we heard he had applied to the court for breach of the injunction. And on 18 January, Tyndall was fined £250 and an estimated £4,000 costs.

## eviction

Meanwhile, Tyndall has failed in attempts to oust the trustees of the NF bloc of shares in the company (Fountaine, Broadley and St Stubbs), and is now serving writs on them. And also over Christmas, Kavanagh served notices to quit on Tyndall, Webster and Verrall - the "publicity department" the Front claims is their only presence in No 73. It could of course have been just a manoeuvre to convince the Inspector that really NF Properties was a "commercial venture" after all, and had nothing to do with the Front. More likely, it's part of the struggle for control of the party and No 73.

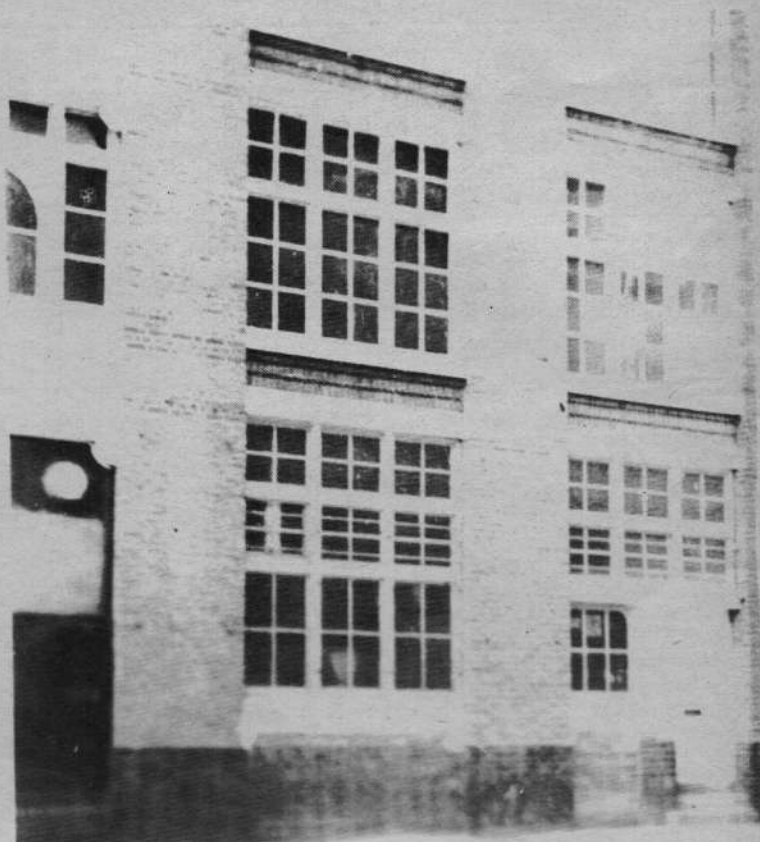
Fountaine, Broadley, Stubbs, Kavanagh are amongst the 28 rebels who signed the manifesto of the Constitutional Movement last November, attacking "the state of corruption that exists at the centre of the party".

A vituperative 18-page document distributed to Front members and sent directly to "Labour Weekly", details the "shabby tricks and sleights of hand perpetrated" by Tyndall, Webster and Verrall in particular. Their resignation is demanded "to avoid the complete destruction of our party". The Anti-Nazi League was able to succeed in getting across the Nazi "smear" which the Constitutional Movement thinks responsible for the election results, because of the "oblique gestures" Tyndall had been photographed making. In addition, they rigged NF direct-orate elections and mismanaged and frittered away party funds. Front supporters found £48,000 for Excalibur House "because of their interest in British Nationalism, not to give Mr Tyndall, Mr Webster and Mr Verrall an asset to lord it over with".

## garbage

There's no dispute over basics, of course. The Document congratulates James Styles, Organiser of Tower Hamlets Branch, for "holding the Brick Lane pitch (so) that the name 'Brick Lane' has become a household word in National Front circles throughout the length and breadth of the country".

Leo Kealey's discomfort over "politics" was, of course, because of all the evidence presented at the hearing to say that the Front shouldn't be in Shoreditch. On crude planning grounds alone, the NF had no case - the Council produced the plans for the area, and was supported by the evidence from the Shoreditch Traders' Action Group that others had been refused planning permission for offices there. Read-Herbert, the Front's solicitor (though he led a breakaway movement over Christmas in Leicester!), argued that the "nature of the user" should not be taken into account.



The outside of the bunker: 73 Great Eastern Street. (Photo: Trojan.)

Town planner Chris Whitaker argued that the NF "presence will act as a focus for violence, which makes it a development which any town planner would seek to avoid".

## filth

Leo Kealey suggested that the Race Relations Act existed to deal with incitement to race hatred or discrimination in employment, although Derrick Day made very clear that the Front would, of course, racially discriminate if they ever are able to employ people. Andrew Arden for Community Link-up suggested that the Council might be deemed to be breaking Section 71 of the Race Relations Act

if it did give planning permission - conniving in a breach of the Act which could be reasonably expected to occur. On the evidence of racial assaults proven to be by the occupants of Excalibur House, the Inspector said that these incidents were the

business of criminal law - not relevant for planning. The Inspector did not record his view of the "incidents" when he inspected the Great Eastern Street premises - an NF enthusiast had to be restrained from searching the Inspector's briefcase and a clerk from the solicitor's representing the Trades Council and the Hackney Council for Racial Equality was refused entry. She is black.

The Inspector told us that he would add the "political" evidence as "appendices" to his report. Heseltine will decide on their relevance.

If the Council's enforcement notices are not upheld, it will be a major setback for Shoreditch, whatever the present disarray in the Front. (Leachouse are awaiting the bailiffs at the registered office in "Chivalry House, Clapham". A distress warrant is out for non-payment of £5,000 rates.) A finding in favour of the NF would speak volumes about the intentions of this government for race relations, and for the inner cities.

# would you work for hackney council?

Residential workers in Hackney's council homes for children, the mentally handicapped and elderly have recently returned to normal working after a dispute lasting since April 1978. Here one of the workers explains what happened during that time.

Residential social workers (RWS) is the official title of those people who work in the local authority homes for children and the elderly. In July 1978 we submitted a pay claim to Hackney Council, rather than wait for our national negotiators to come up with their half-hearted attempt at a pay offer.

## EXPLOITATION

The claim was based on the

Residential Workers' Charter Group which had recently been established to encourage RWS to organise themselves. For years, we have been receiving only a token amount of attention from our union nationally. RWS don't want to put the people in their care at risk and so emotional blackmail has always kept us in a subservient position.

The result is that RWS are amongst the most highly exploited employees on the

Council's payroll. Residential work has always been regarded as second rate; the more old fashioned still regard it as "women's work", with all the bigotry that term involves. After all, looking after children comes naturally - a vocation rather than a job; one that's so rewarding that it doesn't need reasonable wages to pay the bills. The consequences of this attitude were that we had a nine-monthly turnover of staff with an 11-14 per cent vacancy rate - in a job where stability is vitally important to the clients. In several homes there were staff working 80 hours a week or working for weeks on end without days off. The staff/client ratios were such that often the safety of the children and old people couldn't be ensured.

## DEGRADATION

A home must be staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week all year round. This necessitates working shifts,

weekends, bank holidays - all without extra allowances. The one way of making up your pay was the sleeping-in duties we are required to do at the majestic sum of £2.30 per night.

One of our aims was to achieve parity with the field social workers who were and are on a higher pay scale with far better conditions. We wanted to be put on to their scales and be entitled to the relevant allowances. The claim was submitted in July 1978 and the first reaction from the Council was an indication of the spectacular concern they were to show throughout - they simply ignored it. When we did eventually speak to them we were told how wonderful Hackney Council had been in the past in supporting the RWS and to join them in asking for a good national offer. Many fine words about how they understood our difficulties and yes, the vacancy rate was a problem, etc, etc, however, much as they'd love to help

us it was impossible for them to enter into local agreements.

It had taken three months to get them to say that much. A section meeting held in November voted by a small majority to refuse to accept any more children into care. I say a small majority, not because the actual vote was narrow, but many RWS were not unionised, and were against any action.

## ISOLATION

However, we were still caught in the old trap of not wanting to harm our clients. This dilemma remained throughout the next year, knowing that we could present the council with an insoluble problem by striking and yet people still feeling that they couldn't actually walk out.

The Council continued to refuse to negotiate with us but somehow managed to negotiate and settle with the manual workers and the field social workers. The



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- Sat 16 THE WRONG MAN plus DIAL M FOR MURDER late
- Sun 17 STEVIE plus ANGEL IN THE HOUSE aft
- Mon 18 THE LOVE BUG plus BEAVER VALLEY 6 days
- Thurs 21 JUNIOR SHOWTIME morning
- Sat 23 FAMILY PLOT plus THE ANNIVERSARY late
- Sun 24 Asian films: ADA LAT plus AROUND THE WORLD ON 8 DOLLARS aft
- Mon 25 NIGHTWING plus SAVAGE BEES 6 days

For details and times of programmes, please phone the Rio.

## COMING SOON...

This month we start a new regular feature: a preview of the films due in Hackney this month. Now you don't have to endure West End prices and crowds. You can wait at home, with your copy of HPP, and wait for your favourite flick to hit the local screens!

Monty Python's "Life Of Brian" reaches Hackney this month, riding a wave of adverse publicity and packed auditoriums. It is hard to see why it has been objected to so strongly, particularly as attempting to have it banned only provides the makers with the cheapest and most effective form of advertising.

"Brian" is patently not intended to be Christ; he



merely happens to invariably turn up in the wrong part of Judaea at the wrong time; indeed, Brian spends much of the film patiently trying to explain that he is not the Messiah, with predictably Pythonic results. John Cleese looms menacingly in a number of manic minor roles, but

performances are evenly distributed among the team, and even Spike Milligan, who was on holiday in Tunisia while the film was being shot there, wanders dazedly onscreen at one point. "Life Of Brian" will be opening at both the Konak and the Mayfair later this month.

Meanwhile, the Rio caters for all tastes with a vast and varied February programme. Main features include Charles Bronson and the Mafia in "The Valachi Papers", while the Mafia reappear - Japanese-style this time - in "The Yakuza", double-billed with "The Outfit". Crime appears to have become even more common in Hackney's cinemas than

on its streets.

Saturday lates at the Rio offer a "tribute to Sir Alfred", consisting of two Hitchcock double-bills on successive Saturdays. On Thursday afternoons, "Unemployed Cinema" continues to offer an unusual opportunity of audience participation in programming. Women's cinema, Asian films, Junior Showtime and some live events are also included in a packed programme.

Later in the month, a deadly bubonic plague-carrying vampire bat makes its screen debut in "Nightwing", playing at the Rio and the Mayfair, while both the Konak and the Mayfair have "10".

JOHN SKINNER

## A Man for All Seasons

On Saturday 22 December, I went to see, for the second time, the marvellous dramatisation of Roger McGough's epic love poem, "Summer With Monica". The most striking thing of all was that the now legendary Monica is no longer just a name with a thousand different images, but a name with a face to it - the rather gracious face of Alyson Spiro, whose presence filled the stage. The role of Kit Fibber was adequately filled by Gregory Floy whose performance was very forceful. To add to all this the audience was treated to some pretty music which was written and supplied by Andy Roberts.

I managed to get a few words with Roger McGough who turned out to be more impressive and interesting in person than he is on both stage and paper. He says he always wanted to be a painter and although he was good, he didn't feel he was good enough to devote his life to painting, so he turned to writing and in 1964 he wrote a novel, "Frink, A Life In The Day Of". He then joined the Scaffold, which later turned into Grimms, and al-

though his face came through music, he says he was always a poet and would get annoyed when he read things like, "Roger McGough, the singer, says one of his hobbies is poetry".

I asked him how he saw his future as a poet in the eighties. He replied by saying he hopes to continue writing, and maybe a bit more for the theatre. He went on to say that a lot of people regard him as a poet of the sixties, but he pointed out that the bulk of his work was written in the seventies, with different seventies themes, so I see no reason why Roger McGough shouldn't go from being the poet of the seventies to the poet of the eighties.

Sitting in the full house was one Ian Dury, who when I asked him for his opinion of Roger McGough and the show replied, "Any person or show that makes you feel good to be alive, that touches you inside, and reaches your spirit like Roger and his show do, has got to be special, innit, eh!"

MICHAEL LYNCH  
Young Writers' Group  
Centerprise

## RIO AGM

The Rio Centre in Kingsland High Street is now firmly under the control of the community. This was the outcome of the well-attended annual general meeting held in the cinema on Sunday 27 January. A new management committee of 30 people were elected, half as individuals and half as delegates from a wide variety of organisations. This new committee will meet monthly and will elect a smaller executive

committee of 10, which will meet weekly, and to whom the three full-time workers will report.

The first nine months of the Rio's new life as a community cinema and arts projects have produced mixed results. The biggest money-spinners have been the films from the current releases provided to them by Rank. "Alien" and "Bedknobs And Broomsticks" were the most successful! There have also been some notable live gigs, but these have been sometimes very sparsely attended.

The rebuilding of the inside is scheduled to start shortly and this should make

it much more suitable for live events and theatre. Then perhaps, it might develop more energy in this direction.

There was a certain amount of criticism over the outgoing committee's lack of involvement with ethnic minorities over the last year - particularly with young blacks. However, there are some signs that this will improve. A further five spaces have been left on the management committee for co-option of delegates from other organisations; if black and other ethnic groups fill these places, then the balance will go some way to being restored.

Council maintained that both of these were settlements within the national deals but most trade unionists would maintain that they were local settlements. Perhaps if the children were refusing were wrapped in black bags and dumped on the street creating a public embarrassment, the Council might consider talking? Those few councillors who were sympathetic to our claim were told by Councillor Kotz that we were irresponsible, thoughtless and ungrateful, and he reported us to the joint committee of the union and employers for London.

Now we not only had to fight our council but also our union! They insisted that we were wrong not to rely totally on the national offer that was coming out and that we should return to normal working. The national offer, when it came out, was as dire as expected. However, it did increase our sleeping-in allowance to £4.50 - it would now include an hour's overtime and was to be dated from

April 11. The offer was rejected.

## OBFUSCATION

So what happened to all the circulars that were put into the councillors' pigeon holes? It seems that the "Council Who Cares" didn't care to read the information in front of them. They certainly didn't care to speak to the RWs because the majority were always careful to use the back doors when we picketed their meetings. They didn't care to know that the homes were being stretched to the limit. Some had only one member of staff, others were closing down because there was simply no one to staff them.

The Council was willing to take children into care, but after that it seemed to want to wash its hands of any of the problems that existed. The Council did care to pay £100,000 a month into private homes that were taking the children we were refusing. Bloodymindedness and down-

right ignorance and laziness on the Council's part won the day. We eventually gave ground by agreeing to come within the national offer and we thought that the Council would now negotiate as they weren't for a local deal. The Council now refused to negotiate because we were taking action. Obviously, the manual and field SWs were figments of our imagination. The results of a strike ballot indicated the vast majority would refuse to leave the children. But it was decided not to risk splitting the workforce especially as we were totally united in the action we were taking. Those who had not been unionised before were now members and now all meetings with large turnouts voted 100 per cent to continue the action. Regular visits from district and national union officials showed that they blatantly expected to come down and frighten us into giving up and became furious when they only served to unite us; they were worried that they were

losing their control. But we still had a long way to go.

We carried on till November when it became obvious that we would have to strike. Our union insisted that negotiations were effective in getting an improved offer - as expected this was absolute rubbish. When a temporary ceasefire was called and negotiations began, we met a stone wall. Councillor Kotz puffed himself up like a prize peacock and told us that we were getting the best deal in the country. He conveniently ignored the fact that the vast majority were still waiting to see the outcome of our dispute and did he expect us to ignore the weak position RWs are in everywhere else?

## CAPITULATION

We eventually settled in November with possibly only a quarter of what we had originally asked for and only a backdating from October.

Once Councillor Kotz

felt that he had the upper hand with a workforce who weren't willing to be as bloodyminded as he was, winning was what counted.

It was the first time RWs had been involved in taking industrial action in support of their pay claim and we hadn't expected to get everything we asked for but many were naive enough to believe that reason would prevail to some degree and the council surely couldn't expect us to walk out on five-year-old and mentally handicapped children. Certainly, since Hackney settled, many other authorities have begun to settle but a great many of them are finding it a lot less simple than it had been previously. It will still be a long time before residential workers receive the pay they are entitled to. Being isolated in small homes makes it very difficult for RWs to meet together and organise themselves, but it is a problem which is slowly being overcome.



# STRAP TIGHTENING EXERCISE

Leroy's is a manufacturer of plate and precious metal-watch cases and bracelets. Their factory is on the corner of Ball's Pond Road and Essex Road and its 200 homeworkers got a shock when they turned up there with the work they'd done over the Christmas period.

For the last six years, Leroy's have paid them 30p each to assemble a 47-piece watchstrap, a process which takes between 20 and 30 minutes, but at the beginning of January the bosses told the homeworkers, "We're going to cut your wages and only pay you 20p for each strap you make." The excuse they gave for this was international competition which they claimed could produce the same straps for only 7p each. (If this was indeed the case, you can bet your life that Leroy's would sack all their homeworkers and take the straps from a cheaper source.)

## REDUCTION

This reduction in their already pitiful wages was the last straw for the homeworkers who were expecting an increase in their wages after having been paid the same for six years, so after they'd talked about it among themselves, they decided to go to the management together and demand that their wages not be cut.

At this stage, Hackney People's Press received an anonymous phone call asking us to come to Leroy's at the same time as the workers confronted the bosses there, we talked to some of the women. They told HPP that the low wages were only one part of the bad treatment they had to endure at the hands of the Leroy clan. The homeworkers have to collect and return the work to the factory, they have to provide their own bags to pack the work in. They suffer cuts to the hands from the jagged pieces of metal they have to handle every day, and whenever they visit the factory, they have

to wait out in the street until summoned.

Unfortunately, our reporter was unable to remain in the building for the negotiations between the women and the management as two "gentlemen" asked me to leave, and when he asked "Does that mean you're throwing me out?", they said, "Yes".

## ROLLS ROYCE

He waited outside for the end of the negotiations and then Mr Lee, one of the directors, rushed out to explain the "real" side of the matter, in case we had got the wrong end of the story from the workers. Over the bonnet of his Rolls Royce (no joke), he said, "We have to go in for a real belt-tightening exercise", and that their order book only had £60,000 worth of orders. He ended his remarks with, "We like to keep our girls happy." Mr Lee's words don't count for much when you compare the £15,000 he earns with £10 a week that one of the women earns for a 28-hour week.

When the women emerged, they said that they had agreed with the management to a rate of 25p for each strap, a cut of 5p. They saw this as a victory, as it was the first time that they had ever been able to affect any decisions about their work. One of them said, "We wouldn't have achieved anything if you (The Press) hadn't been there."

We went to Companies House to have a look at the records of Leroy and Sons to see if they have "suffered from competition", as the directors claim. It's difficult to make comparisons between different sets of their accounts because 18 months ago they had a fire which burned down their last premises, and burned down a lot of their records, too. At the same time, their auditors resigned.

# Turkish Garment Workers Flex Muscles



Leroys also claimed £45,000 off their insurers for loss of profits.

## PROFIT

During the period for which the last accounts were made up, Leroy's exported £69,830 worth of goods, which contradicts their statement that it is foreign competition which is causing them problems. They made a profit last year of £358,994 and brought forward a profit from the previous period of £110,091, making a total profit of £479,085.

By getting the 200 homeworkers to accept even a 5p cut in the rate for the job, as Leroy's managed to do, they will make an extra profit of £50,000.

We contacted Hackney Homeworking Officer, whose job is to liaise with firms and to see what they thought about the situation, and he said that Leroy's is not covered by the Wages Councils which sets minimum pay rates for various industries. The factory is just over the border in Islington, he added, but he has passed on the information to them.

Obviously, it's up to the homeworkers to say to Leroy's that instead of cutting our wages you should start paying us all 10p more for each strap. If they did that, they would still make an annual profit of £379,000.

On Saturday 19 January, over 100 people took part in a demonstration organised by Hackney Trades Council, Turkish workers and the Union of Turkish Progressives to protest about massive unemployment among Turkish garment workers.

The marchers assembled outside Hackney Town Hall and were greeted by Dermot McNeil, secretary of the Trades Council. He condemned the situation in which immigrant workers, "totally unaware of their rights, come to work and are told to clear off by the employers when trade is slack". He also attacked the appalling wages of homeworkers, again mostly immigrants, many of whom are working for as little as 10p an hour. He said that it was essential for immigrant workers to organise into trade unions in order to recognise their rights and fight exploitation, and that the Trades Council would try to recruit as many Turkish, Greek and Asian workers as possible into the unions.

The demonstrators then marched along Graham Road to Dalston Junction and on to Newington Green, singing Turkish songs and chanting, "No to unemployment" and "Unity in the Union".

One spokesperson on the demonstration told HPP that the rag trade was facing a serious decline, and many small "sweatshops" and even larger, more reputable fact-

ories in Hackney have been forced to close down or "rationalise" their output. As a result, unemployment among the predominantly Turkish workers has risen sharply. Only about 25 out of the 150 factories owned by the Turkish people are now open.

A spokesperson from the Turkish Workers' Association says: "Although the number of the unemployed in the clothing industry is very difficult to give a figure to because most of them are workers without work permits and working without paying taxes, observations show that between 800-1,000 are now unemployed. Because they cannot get unemployment benefits or social security, they are either living on their savings or money borrowed from each other. Some of them manage to live on temporary jobs they find."

"Most of the unemployed spend their time in the cafes, seeking employment. Most of the cafes are acting as agents between the factories and the workers."

The larger, more established retail clothes manufacturers have suffered just as much as the smaller companies in the slump that has hit the fashion market. Over the past few months, out of 60 large retailers that operated in the borough only 20 are now open. Some manufacturers have adapted by moving into other areas of fashion. Mono, for example, has closed down its coat-making business and moved into the field of cosmetics. But very few companies are able to adapt in this way.

What is also disturbing is the way factory owners are exploiting the fact that most of the workers are unaware of their rights under the Employment Protection Act; in several places people have turned up for work to be told there are no more orders, and they are sent home without pay. As a result, the Tailors and Garment Workers Union is anxious to organise the rag trade workers into fighting for better job security.

# COUNCIL REFUSE TO ACCEPT RESPONSIBILITIES

No improvements have been made in Hackney's much-criticised refuse collection because the council has not reviewed the 'dustman's beat' for eighteen years. This breaks an agreement made in 1962. So claim the National Union of Public Employees. And now that the council has finally looked at the service they have tried to foist onto the dustmen a scheme to provide additional collections that would lead to:

- \* FEWER jobs
- \* a possible REDUCTION in pay because of the loss of overtime
- \* ADDITIONAL work for dustmen who don't lose their job.

Consequently the Union is rejecting Hackney Council's 'Bonus Scheme' and seeking to negotiate an improved service without losses to members. They disagree with the Borough's claim that the scheme could be worth 33% to refuse collectors.

Despite the continued 'Union Bashing' by the local

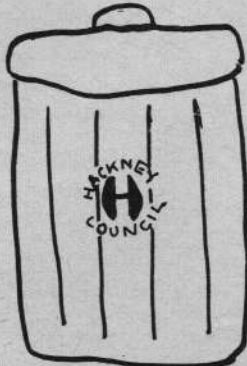
commercial press, as John Chalkley (NUPE shop steward), points out the dustmen themselves have as much to gain by improving services as anyone else. Virtually all Hackney dustmen live in the Borough and require services for their own homes. The Union itself would like to see a better deal for rate-payers, and recognises that the current situation is far from adequate.

## INITIATIVE

It was pointed out to HPP that it was the unions who went to management to look for a different way of working. In 1962 the Council agreed to review the dustman's round every twelve months, but this has not been done. So the unions took the initiative. As a result of that they have suffered further from a hostile press and public, who look back only to the stoppage of services last winter.

Talks are nevertheless continuing between council and dustmen, and there is no dispute at present. NUPE hopes

for a 'package' deal between the workers and management that would involve reorganising the areas worked but maintaining the same number of rounds. Once this is done, they believe, the number of vehicles needed for collections can only be worked out in practice, perhaps over six months. After this the crews (of dustcarts) can realistically work out details of manpower with management and unions help.



This contrasts with the unrealistic 'overnight changes' the Council seems to have originally wanted.

Clearly the organisation of such collections, to

cover every shop, factory and home in the Borough, is a complicated matter, and not something that can change at a moment's notice without proper consultation. It is hoped to include an increase in the number of collections from certain establishments per week, for example the shops in Mare Street which leave rubbish on the pavement all week. Currently they are only served weekly, whereas there is recognised need for three or four collections a week.

So a better service is now under negotiation, but the NUPE members are not going to pay with loss of jobs for more work.

Meanwhile, a long-running issue still continuing to cause difficulty has been that of the Hackney Borough Council fitters. They maintain essential council equipment, such as vehicles. Without their work, refuse collections, meals on wheels and other vital services could not operate. The fitters are skilled workers and members of the Associated Union of Engineering Workers (AUW).

The Council have tried to get them to accept a bonus scheme, too, but AUW shop steward Jimmy Gadd does not regard the scheme as being satisfactory. He points out that the differentials between the fitters and the manual workers have been eroded so greatly as to hardly be of significance any longer, in some cases amounting to about £1 per week. So the AUW seeks to restore recognition to the skilled craftsmen.

Jimmy Gadd was keen to stress that improvements are being sought through "improved co-operation", and points out that although the problem is a long-running one, there has been no major strike in 14 years. This is despite allegations that the Council has been "shoving under the table" issues of work and pay, health and safety with regard to the fitters. A recent development has been the establishment of a Joint Shop Stewards' Committee with the Building Division, to increase levels of co-operation between different unions and council. Negotiations were continuing as we went to press.



# HACKNEY

February

# KIDS PAPER

## David's story

continued from last month.

"David".

"Yes mum"

"Why are you putting your clothes into your suitcase?"

"Because I'm leaving home mum."

"And what makes you think that you can leave home without your father's or my permission?"

"Are you trying to be funny mum?"

"No I'm perfectly serious."

"O.K. mum. Can I have your permission to leave home please?"

"No you can't have my permission to leave home."

"O.K. then. I'll leave

without your permission."

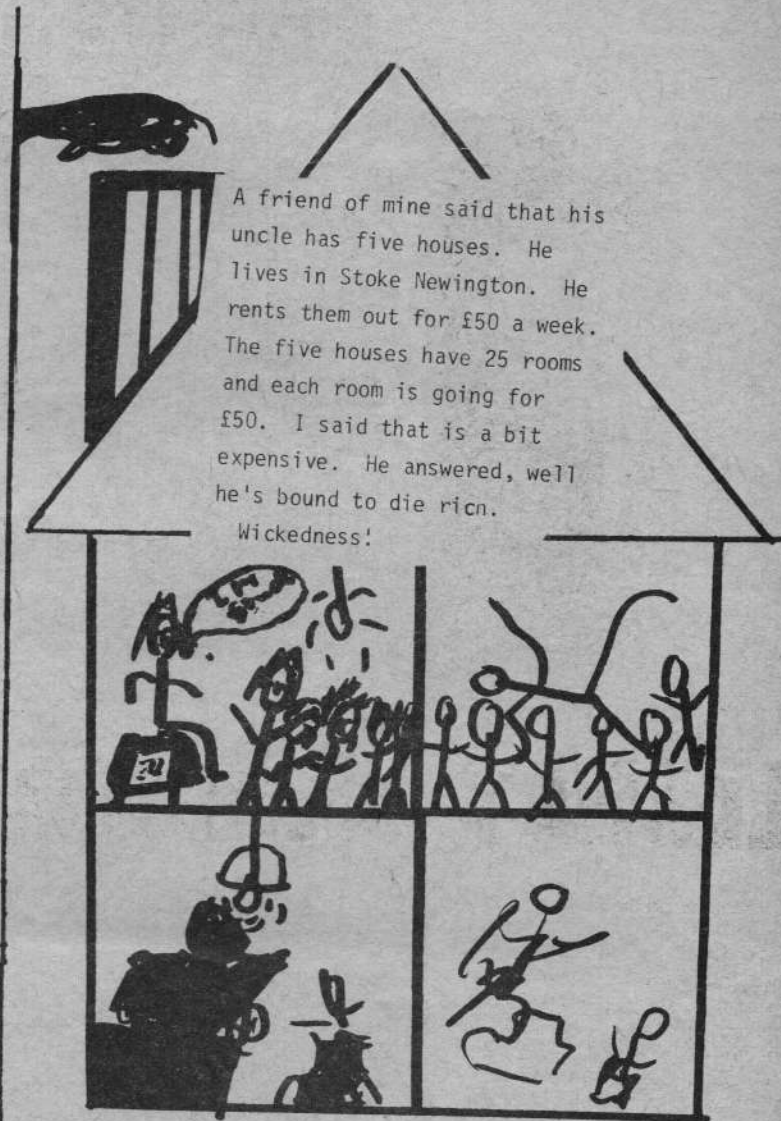
David had then just finished packing his clothes when he had just realised how could he get onto the aeroplane without any money. Then he thought to himself that if his father's wallet was on the sideboard as usual he would take some money out of it. He knew that there was money in his father's wallet because he had just drawn £2000 from the bank to buy a car for himself.

As David was going downstairs into the living room he picked up the wallet when no-one was looking.

To be continued next month.

## DISRUPTIVE PUPILS

I am a disruptive pupil and I used to go to Hackney Downs School but now I go to the Hackney Schools Support Centre. The people who work there are great and their names are Sally, Moira, Brenda, Nancy, Ollie and Jon. And back to the centre, the centre is made up of two classrooms, one recreation room, one craft room, a reading room and a dinner room. I have learnt more in one week at the HSSC than a week in HDS. The other kids who go there are Nicky, Ahkeen, Janice, Justain, Leonard, Culu and they are just simply fantastic.



A friend of mine said that his uncle has five houses. He lives in Stoke Newington. He rents them out for £50 a week. The five houses have 25 rooms and each room is going for £50. I said that is a bit expensive. He answered, well he's bound to die rich. Wickedness!

## PRODUCED BY

Hackney Kids' Paper is produced by Dean Smith, Paul Bellenie, Delroy Smith, Roland Black, Chris Bryant, Lloyd Brown and Nicky Crowe. If you want to help, call in to Centerprise any Friday evening.

## X-WORD ANSWERS

- ACROSS
1. Three 3. Four 5. Punks
  2. Ten 2. Rapping 4. UFO
  3. Sid 7. Madness
  4. The Who
  5. Cats 13. Rain
  6. Stones 9. The Who
  7. Sid 7. Madness
  8. Stones 9. The Who
  9. The Who
  10. Cat 13. Rain
- DOWN
1. Three 3. Four 5. Punks
  2. Ten 2. Rapping 4. UFO
  3. Sid 7. Madness
  4. The Who
  5. Cats 13. Rain
  6. Stones 9. The Who
  7. Sid 7. Madness
  8. Stones 9. The Who
  9. The Who
  10. Cat 13. Rain

## Hackney Kids' Project Jumble Sale

Saturday, 9th Feb.  
2.00pm at Centerprise

Next week there's a jumble sale in aid of Hackney Kids' Project to help us to go to France. We need to raise £1,500 to pay for our visit. Please support all our fundraising efforts.

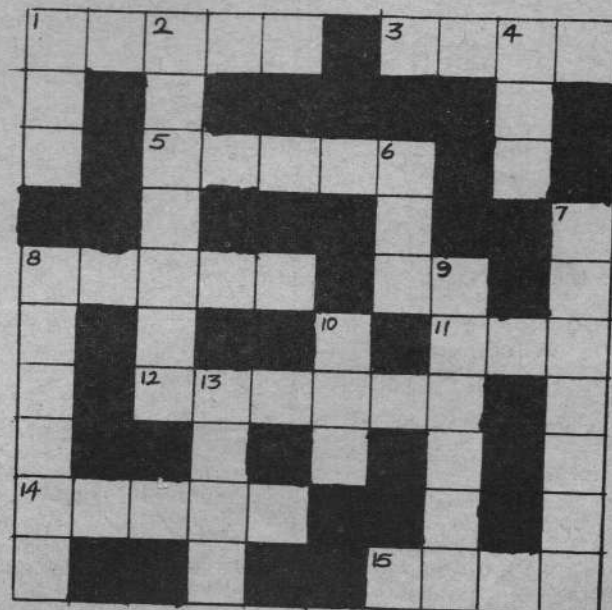
## POP QUIZWORD

ACROSS

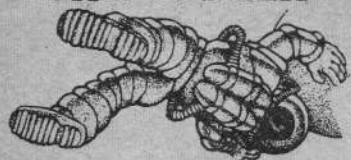
1. How many people in the rock group POLICE?
3. How many singers in BONEY M?
5. What do you call a group of people who put safety pins in their ears?
8. What is the nickname of the lead singer in POLICE?
10. An old record - "If I A Hammer".
12. What film did Olivia Newton John and John Travolta play in?
14. The king of rock 'n' roll.
15. What is the name of people who have targets on the back of their coats,

DOWN

1. On most charts you see the top \_\_\_\_.
2. What is jousting to soul music called?
4. Flying saucer.
6. A Vicious punk.
7. Who play 'One Step Beyond'?
8. The name of this group is the ROLLING \_\_\_\_.
9. Knock, knock. Who's there,
10. \_\_\_\_ STEVENS, pop singer.
13. This old song is called "Singing In The \_\_\_\_".



## STAR..TREK THE MOVIE review



## GOOD or BAD ?

Star Trek was a pretty good picture, the beginning was a bit exciting but the middle part of the film was very boring. It was the most boring part of the film. The Star Ship Enterprise was looking for a machine which was killing off other ships and nothing could destroy it. In the end they found it and it wanted

its master but its master died a few years back and they did not know what to do. Anyway a man pretended to be the creator and he joined up with the machine and they went off into space. Anyway the film was all right and the special effects were very good.

I do not like Star Trek. It is a boring picture. The story is rubbish and some of the actors are bad. The effects are brilliant because of all the bright lights and because of the intruder ship. The intruder ship is good all the blue. I like the intruder ship because it fires a white ball at other ships and it sort of electrocutes it and it disappears.



# MARCH AGAINST DEATH TRAIN

Photos: Clive Aldiss.



Mutants Against Newkiller Energy - of which the person (right) is probably a member - were amongst the many who supported Hackney Anti Nuclear Group's (HANG) local demonstration against the transport of nuclear waste through Hackney and Islington. About two hundred people assembled at Highbury and Islington station on the morning of Saturday January 26th and marched along the streets by the North London Line, past Canonbury and Dalston Junction stations for a rally at the Town Hall, Mare Street. The demonstration aimed to give warning to the potential danger of transporting highly radioactive material through densely populated areas. An accident involving a leakage of nuclear waste could render a large area of London uninhabitable for over a century and cause numerous deaths, an increase in cancer rates and genetic mutations if no evacuation took place in time.

In the afternoon a London-wide demo. was supported by about two thousand Anti Nuclear protesters. This march went from Primrose Hill to Willesden, also following the North London line.

An attempt at direct action the previous night at Stratford was foiled by an 'informer'. Although only a handful of people were involved in a plan to halt a nuclear train, the old problem of security reared its ugly head and won the day, or night.



## LESNEY WORKFORCE DRIVEN OUT

Continued from page 1.

said that out of 71 women evening workers there, only 15 were left, despite management promises to keep on 20. These women, nearly all non-union, are apparently now having to cope with the original work load. She was incensed at the 'sell-out', and claims there was no mass meeting of all the unions to discuss redundancy arrangements. She also claims the Company, by presenting the final redundancy deal at such short notice, was effectively allowed to get rid of its workers at one stroke, paying no heed to those who had worked the longest. One man of 61 left, with only 4 years' work to go; and, by coincidence, nearly all those who left were involved in the union.

### DENIED

These allegations were vigorously denied by George Anthony, President of the North London branch of the AUEW. He claims that all the redundancies were voluntary. He said he advised against shop stewards signing a management document on redundancies on behalf of the workers, and that instead each individual should make their own decision. He also claims he advised workers not to opt to leave on the Friday but to hang on for a better deal; however, he said, the workers preferred to leave then and pick up their 8 weeks' pay and it was only later that they complained about union inactivity.

Although those workers who left on the 25th did volunteer to make themselves redundant, many of them believed that they would lose out financially if they stayed on, and no-one seemed to be

there to convince them this was not true.

One workers from the Eastway factory said he saw only one full-time union official on the Wednesday who went round advising people. He also claims many workers, mostly union activists, were told that if they did stay, things would get difficult.

Whether the union was

unable to prevent workers leaving on Friday, or whether they could have won a better deal, it should be asked why the unions concerned were unable to secure a binding - and more rewarding - redundancy deal.

The Company certainly won all the way. There are rumours that Lesney's want to cut back their factory

space as soon as possible: so it was in their interests that many people left before they had to actually sack them.

### WHIZZ-KID

The company recently appointed new 'whizz-kid' executives to re-organise local operations. Yet this seems to be a little late. As one of the largest toy manufacturers in the country, Lesneys had the resources to adapt to the changing trends in the toy market; and for its directors not to have recognised and adapted to those trends is, to say the least, short-sighted. However, Lesneys did well out of the deal: it now has half the workforce, nearly all non-union, doing more work, which it is quite prepared to give a 10% pay rise because the other half didn't see a penny of it and are now safely out of the way.

## LITTLE WHEELS BIG PROFITS

A survey of Lesney's performance over the last three years shows that the management have never given any reasons to be seriously concerned about the future of the company. Last year's annual report, published in June 1979, showed the chairman, PM Tapscott, declaring that the "product range was stronger than ever and the group's production resources have never been greater... there is much in the company's favour which should result in a better trading year." The position was so favourable that the company was able to declare the maximum dividend that they were allowed by law, 3.242p per share. This gave the two principal shareholders, Mr J W Odell and Mr L C Smith, who are also directors, dividends of £194,000 and £209,000 for the 5.9 million and 6.4 million shares that they control each.

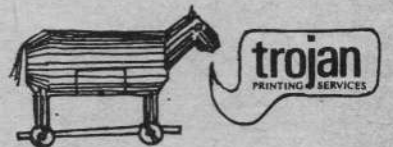
### Maximum

Nor is this type of performance unusual. Each shareholder also received the maximum dividend, 2.904p, in 1978, when the chairman's report

was still encouraging, although perhaps not so enthusiastic as in 1977, which positively oozed self-congratulation. The company was awarded the Queen's Award for Export Achievement for the fifth time, turnover was up 30 per cent and profit was up to £5.7 million from £4 million. "Despite the world recession," the chairman said, "this has been a record year by a useful margin." They had had a good result in the world's biggest market, the USA, they had purchased the "Vogue Dolls" company there, they were planning new group headquarters in Southgate, and they had expanded their catalogue in every way. This included a "baby doll that burps...giftpacked inn signs and, especially for the Jubilee, Royal Coats of Arms, plated and mounted on a choice of stands."

These reports suggest that there are other reasons for their move out of Hackney. The factories at Eastway are old and cramped. They have acquired 70,000 square feet at Harold Hill in Essex, to "relieve production pressure" and they could be planning to move there completely.

ADVERTISEMENT



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London N1

01-254 1306

Workers' Co-operative

- BADGES
- POSTERS
- LEAFLETS

Solution to HPP crossword no 7

### ACROSS

1. Twinge 4. Exhibit 9. Blue blood 10. Thumb 11. Overt 12. Newspaper 13. Darkest 15. Recite 17. Ananas 19. Sutures 22. Stockpile 24. Halma 26. Arena 27. Do too much 28. Redwing 29. Strand

### DOWN

1. Tabloid 2. In use 3. Go-between 4. Endower 5. Het up 6. Blue Peter 7. Tubers 8. Bonnet 14. Run to seed 16. Cut-throat 18. Shindig 19. Sheath 20. Scathed 21. Astair 23. Khaki 25. Lauda

## HACKNEY PEOPLE'S PRESS

HACKNEY PEOPLE'S PRESS is an alternative non-profit making monthly newspaper produced by an open group of people who live or work in Hackney. We publish the paper because we believe that Hackney needs an alternative to the commercial press to serve the real interests of its people. We have no editor and no shareholders and no one is paid by the paper.

HPP is your newspaper: anyone who lives or works in Hackney is welcome to come and help us. All decisions are made collectively.

We hold meetings every Monday (except the last one in each month) at 8pm in Centerprise, 136 Kingsland High Street, E8. You can come along to one of these meetings and volunteer to help us write, produce or sell the next issue - or simply tell us what you think of the paper.

If you can't come one Monday then write to us c/o Centerprise or ring 249 0311 any evening or weekend.

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